

News

United States
Department
Of Labor



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USDL-06-240

For release: Friday, September 1, 2006

Union Membership in the New England States, 2005

In 2005, union membership rates for wage and salary workers in New England were above the national average of 12.5 percent in the southern New England states of Connecticut and Rhode Island (15.9 percent each) and Massachusetts (13.9 percent), according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among the 50 states, 19 had rates of union membership above that for the nation. Regional Commissioner Denis M. McSweeney noted that only 10 states nationally had higher union membership rates than Connecticut and Rhode Island in 2005. The 3 northern New England states--Maine (11.9 percent), Vermont (10.8 percent), and New Hampshire (10.4 percent)--were among 31 states and the District of Columbia that had union membership rates below the U.S. average. (See table 1)

Among all states nationally, five had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2005--New York (26.1 percent), Hawaii (25.8 percent), Alaska (22.8 percent), and Michigan and New Jersey (20.5 percent each). Another five states reported union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2005. South Carolina and North Carolina recorded the lowest membership rates, 2.3 and 2.9 percent, respectively. Arkansas and Virginia had the next lowest rates in 2005 (4.8 percent each), followed closely by Utah (4.9 percent).

Just over one-half (7.9 million) of the 15.7 million union members in the U.S. lived in six states (California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New Jersey), though these states accounted for less than one-third of wage and salary employment nationally. The largest numbers of union members lived in California (2.4 million) and New York (2.1 million). Massachusetts had 402,000 union members in 2005, the highest number in the New England states and 11th highest nationwide. Union membership levels aggregated among the New England states totaled 893,000 workers, comprising six percent of the total union membership level in the U.S.

State union membership levels depend on both the union membership rate and the employment level. For example, Florida and Massachusetts had virtually the same number of union members--401,000 and 402,000 employees, respectively--even though Florida's wage and salary employment level was over two and one-half times that of Massachusetts. Consequently, the union membership rate in Massachusetts registered a much higher 13.9 percent versus 5.4 percent in Florida. Similarly, Pennsylvania had nearly 50 percent more union members than Texas, despite having 4.0 million fewer wage and salary workers.

Five years earlier in 2000, union membership rates for wage and salary workers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maine were all above the national average of 13.5 percent. Rhode Island at 18.2 percent, Connecticut at 16.3 percent, Massachusetts at 14.3 percent and Maine at 14.0 percent were among the 23 states and the District of Columbia with rates above the national average. Only New Hampshire at 10.4 percent and Vermont at 10.3 percent had union membership rates below the national average. (See table 2.)

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides the basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected national sample of about 60,000 households nationwide. The union membership data are tabulated from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded.

Union membership data for 2005 are not strictly comparable with data for 2004 and earlier years because of the introduction in January 2005 of revised population controls used in the CPS. The effect of the revised population controls on the union membership estimates is unknown. However, the effect of the new controls on the monthly CPS estimates for the U.S. was to decrease the December 2004 employment level by 45,000 and the unemployment level by 4,000. The updated controls had little or no effect on unemployment rates and other ratios. For additional information, see "Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2005" in the February 2005 issue of *Employment and Earnings*, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps05adj.pdf>. (Levels are not comparable between any pair of years.)

For personal assistance or further information on union membership, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the New England Information Office at 617-565-2327 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200, TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or sampling error, varies depending upon the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the "true" population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by nonsampling error. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors, see the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" section of *Employment and Earnings*.

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this release are described briefly below.

Union members. Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

Represented by unions. Data refer to union members, as well as workers who have no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

Wage and salary workers. Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. The group includes employees in both the private and public sectors, but, for the purposes of the union membership and earnings series, excludes all self-employed persons, regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state

(Numbers in thousands)

State	2004					2005				
	Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²		Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²	
		Total	Percent of em- ployed	Total	Percent of em- ployed		Total	Percent of em- ployed	Total	Percent of em- ployed
Alabama.....	1,861	181	9.7	213	11.5	1,909	195	10.2	223	11.7
Alaska.....	268	54	20.1	60	22.4	275	63	22.8	66	24.1
Arizona.....	2,323	145	6.3	183	7.9	2,366	145	6.1	181	7.7
Arkansas.....	1,058	51	4.8	65	6.2	1,138	54	4.8	68	6.0
California.....	14,414	2,385	16.5	2,588	18.0	14,687	2,424	16.5	2,610	17.8
Colorado.....	2,050	172	8.4	191	9.3	2,052	170	8.3	193	9.4
Connecticut.....	1,539	235	15.3	256	16.6	1,550	247	15.9	263	17.0
Delaware.....	373	46	12.4	49	13.2	386	46	11.8	50	12.9
District of Columbia.....	258	33	12.7	38	14.5	259	29	11.3	33	12.8
Florida.....	6,943	414	6.0	533	7.7	7,389	401	5.4	532	7.2
Georgia.....	3,773	242	6.4	282	7.5	3,765	190	5.0	226	6.0
Hawaii.....	533	126	23.7	132	24.8	545	141	25.8	145	26.7
Idaho.....	561	33	5.8	44	7.9	606	31	5.2	38	6.3
Illinois.....	5,410	908	16.8	971	17.9	5,473	927	16.9	965	17.6
Indiana.....	2,717	311	11.4	338	12.4	2,789	346	12.4	368	13.2
Iowa.....	1,345	141	10.5	171	12.7	1,369	157	11.5	185	13.5
Kansas.....	1,223	103	8.4	132	10.8	1,210	85	7.0	115	9.5
Kentucky.....	1,699	164	9.6	197	11.6	1,696	164	9.7	184	10.8
Louisiana.....	1,697	129	7.6	157	9.3	1,778	114	6.4	132	7.4
Maine.....	564	64	11.3	74	13.2	582	69	11.9	79	13.6
Maryland.....	2,502	272	10.9	313	12.5	2,530	337	13.3	379	15.0
Massachusetts.....	2,920	393	13.5	430	14.7	2,886	402	13.9	431	14.9
Michigan.....	4,305	930	21.6	966	22.4	4,288	880	20.5	916	21.4
Minnesota.....	2,429	424	17.5	443	18.3	2,494	392	15.7	410	16.4
Mississippi.....	1,108	53	4.8	70	6.3	1,089	77	7.1	105	9.7
Missouri.....	2,546	315	12.4	357	14.0	2,532	290	11.5	319	12.6
Montana.....	366	43	11.7	46	12.6	391	42	10.7	48	12.2
Nebraska.....	831	69	8.3	83	10.0	830	69	8.3	79	9.5
Nevada.....	1,006	126	12.5	144	14.3	1,051	145	13.8	158	15.1
New Hampshire.....	618	61	9.9	68	11.0	627	65	10.4	72	11.5
New Jersey.....	3,769	745	19.8	813	21.6	3,868	791	20.5	838	21.7
New Mexico.....	734	49	6.7	65	8.9	777	63	8.1	83	10.7
New York.....	7,901	1,996	25.3	2,085	26.4	8,008	2,090	26.1	2,201	27.5
North Carolina.....	3,549	97	2.7	127	3.6	3,631	107	2.9	143	3.9
North Dakota.....	292	22	7.7	26	9.0	289	21	7.3	26	9.2
Ohio.....	4,998	759	15.2	820	16.4	5,039	804	16.0	866	17.2
Oklahoma.....	1,402	86	6.1	100	7.1	1,432	77	5.4	91	6.4
Oregon.....	1,471	224	15.2	243	16.5	1,470	213	14.5	231	15.7
Pennsylvania.....	5,298	793	15.0	842	15.9	5,456	753	13.8	818	15.0
Rhode Island.....	487	79	16.3	83	17.0	494	79	15.9	83	16.8
South Carolina.....	1,765	54	3.0	74	4.2	1,739	40	2.3	58	3.3
South Dakota.....	347	21	6.0	27	7.7	350	21	5.9	29	8.2
Tennessee.....	2,465	164	6.7	191	7.7	2,368	128	5.4	156	6.6
Texas.....	9,072	457	5.0	573	6.3	9,485	506	5.3	590	6.2
Utah.....	1,001	58	5.8	67	6.7	1,035	51	4.9	63	6.1
Vermont.....	291	29	9.8	33	11.4	287	31	10.8	37	13.0
Virginia.....	3,308	176	5.3	218	6.6	3,406	165	4.8	211	6.2
Washington.....	2,645	510	19.3	536	20.3	2,746	523	19.1	559	20.4
West Virginia.....	700	99	14.2	110	15.7	688	99	14.4	107	15.5
Wisconsin.....	2,597	414	16.0	439	16.9	2,551	410	16.1	438	17.2
Wyoming.....	222	18	8.0	22	9.8	228	18	7.9	22	9.5

¹ Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.² Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union as well as workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

NOTE: Beginning in January 2005, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full-and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Table 2. Union membership¹ of employed wage and salary workers in the U.S. and New England, annual averages, 2000 and 2005

(Numbers in thousands)

State	2000		2005		2000 to 2005 Membership	
	Total members	Percent of employed	Total members	Percent of employed	Net Change	Percent Change
United States	16,258	13.5	15,685	12.5	-573	-3.5%
Connecticut	246	16.3	247	15.9	1	0.4%
Maine	78	14.0	69	11.9	-9	-11.5%
Massachusetts	406	14.3	402	13.9	-4	-1.0%
New Hampshire	60	10.4	65	10.4	5	8.3%
Rhode Island	80	18.2	79	15.9	-1	-1.3%
Vermont	28	10.3	31	10.8	3	10.7%

(1) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

(2) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as workers who are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract.

Table 3. Union representation² of employed wage and salary workers in the U.S. and New England, annual averages, 2000 and 2005

(Numbers in thousands)

State	2000		2005		2000 to 2005 Represented	
	Total Represented	Percent of employed	Total Represented	Percent of employed	Net Change	Percent Change
United States	17,944	14.9	17,223	13.7	-721	-4.0%
Connecticut	262	17.4	263	17.0	1	0.4%
Maine	92	16.6	79	13.6	-13	-14.1%
Massachusetts	445	15.7	431	14.9	-14	-3.1%
New Hampshire	67	11.6	72	11.5	5	7.5%
Rhode Island	83	18.8	83	16.8	0	0.0%
Vermont	34	12.4	37	13.0	3	8.8%

(1) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

(2) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as workers who are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract.

NOTES: Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time workers. All self-employed workers are excluded, regardless of whether their businesses are incorporated. Data are based on one-fourth of the full sample (the outgoing rotation groups). As a result, employment levels may not match the official annual average employment figures issued by the Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program.